

BROADLY SPEAKING

Our man behind the gates, **Richard Jordan-Baker**, shares life living at Broadlands



‘Only takes one tree to make 1,000 matches. Only takes one match to burn 1,000 trees.’

Only a few weeks ago there was a day when work was still very much work but was also one of those days when one couldn't help but think: 'This really isn't a bad way to earn a living'.

We were the location for the filming of the latest Stereophonics 'video' or, as a they are now called, 'promo'. For the uninitiated, the Stereophonics are a Welsh rock band that have been making music for the best part of 20 years. This summer they will undertake a large arena and stadium tour of the USA and Europe including headlining the Isle of Wight Festival. In essence, they're A-list rock stars and I like them very much. Hence, this was not a dull day!

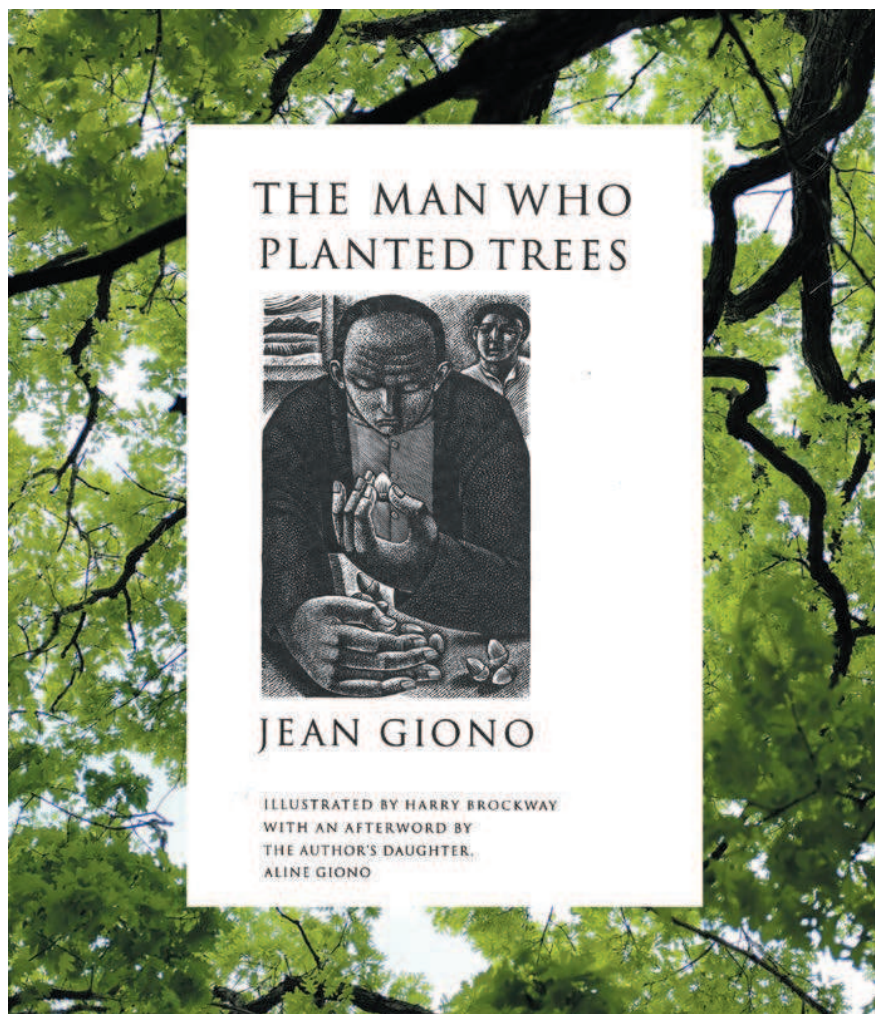
Advice often given is don't meet famous people you admire because if they're not all you hope, you'll be disappointed.

Claire once banned me from saying hello to Kristin Scott Thomas in the bar at the Albert Hall for just this reason. She was right. If the lovely Kristin had sent me off with a flea in my ear I would have been desolate.

Kelly Jones and the three other members of the band were charm itself and could not have been more generous of spirit. As filming tends to be there was lots of waiting, so, there could be lots of talking. Even though I admonished them for not playing my favourite song, *Indian Summer*, when I had seen them last at the BIC, they were still warm, friendly and modest with everyone involved. I wasn't disappointed and they signed a record cover I just happened to have in the boot of the car!

I hope Mr Kelly Jones and his publishers are *empatico* and don't see fit to chase me for breach of copyright in quoting the opening words from their song *A Thousand Trees* at the beginning of this column. The song, actually not about trees at all but instead a metaphor for something dark and dismal, are words that have stuck with me since the very first time I heard the song and remind me of how quick and easy it is to destroy rather than create. Watching the fires burn in and around Los Angeles only a few weeks ago showed us all the power of fire and its ability to not only destroy property and life but also trees and therefore the habitats of thousands of animals and other wildlife.

Jean Giono wrote a very small book in the 1950s, in France. It is called *The Man Who Planted Trees*. I will not spoil it for my reader, but it is about a man and some acorns. It is a metaphor, an allegory and a parable. It is extraordinary and was given to me by



Tree talk

someone who shares my love of trees. It is summed up, in my edition, thus: 'The man who planted trees is a hymn to creation and a purveyor of confidence in man's ability to change his – indeed the world's – lot.'

The edition I have, published by The Harvill Press, includes beautiful and very striking black and white engravings by Harry Brockway, the like of which I had not seen before or since.

February saw over 1,000 new trees planted on the Broadlands Estate. These, in the main, a mix of native species at various woodland locations. Also, some larger specimens in the listed park that surrounds the house. These form part of a large, long-term and

highly researched and nuanced scheme to part recreate the 18th-century landscape planting of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Equally important, they will provide wildlife habitat for decades to come.

This month's image was due to be a photograph of the newly planted trees but I can't get to them because of the flooding.

So, instead, the cover of *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Providing sustenance as I write is a glass of Chateau Ksara from the Bekaa Valley in the Lebanon. I was planning a wine trip with two friends to the Lebanon just before that part of the world erupted into violence. Maybe the current ceasefire will enable this trip to happen. ●